

## Statement on the Compassionate Aid in Dying For Terminally Ill Patients Act

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Good morning, Senator Gerratana and Representative Johnson, and Members of the Committee.

I am Mickey MacIntyre, Chief Program Officer of Compassion & Choices, the nation's oldest and largest nonprofit organization working to improve care and expand choice at the end of life.

Compassion & Choices and our more than 5,000 Connecticut members support the COMPASSIONATE AID IN DYING FOR TERMINALLY ILL PATIENTS legislation, H.B. No. 5326 (RAISED), and the sponsors' efforts to improve the quality of Connecticut's end-of-life care for terminally ill patients and their families.

We applaud the Committee for considering the bill at this opportune time. This bill is sound legislation based on safe implementation in Oregon for over 15 years and other states. The citizens of this state deserve its passage into law.

The people of Connecticut are like the people in the rest of the nation: they want to control their end-of-life decisions. They want the support of their family and physicians to do so. And they do not want government interference when facing the end of their lives. Right now in this nation, we are seeing a wave of people speaking out to demand death with dignity and end-of-life autonomy.

The bill allows a mentally competent adult who has a terminal diagnosis of less than six

months to live to bring about his or her own peaceful death with physician-prescribed medication. Aid in dying has overwhelming public support – it enjoys almost 70 percent support in Connecticut.

Today you will hear why the support is so widespread. You will see the faces and hear the stories of Connecticut residents who are demanding their rights, or the rights of people they care about, at the end of life. You will hear from religious leaders and healthcare professionals with first-hand stories about the suffering that too many terminally ill patients endure. From a medical student who has seen families and patients go through what's called 'the long good-bye,' and from an incredibly brave woman who is battling ALS.

Additionally, you will be offered legislative proposals as false alternatives to death-with-dignity legislation. And you will hear dueling polling findings. Words and numbers are important. But at the heart of this debate are people. The people who will find solace from having an additional option to reduce their suffering when death is the outcome they confront. Let that death happen with some control. Let that death end unbearable suffering. And let that death be peaceful.

I hope that you will listen with an open mind to the people who come forward today. And find the compassion in your heart to give dying people one more option to control their final days with increased dignity and peace.